VOL. I.—No. 22. MANCHESTER, Saturday, December 19, 1868. Price One Penny

"He roar'd, he beat his breast, he tore his hair."
DRYDEN.

Moderns have no such most outrageous motions,
They put away the hat they cannot wear;
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Pure Sherries Imported direct by ourselves from Cadiz.

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18/- Per Doz.
This Excellent Sicilian Wine, of Sherry character, only needs to be more known to become a permanent Dinner Wine with the bulk of the people, who cannot afford to give fancy prices for wines for general use.

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THE "FLORENCE"
LOCKSTITCH SEWING MACHINES
ARE THE BEST.

THEY WILL HEM, FELL, TUCK, CORD, BRAID, BIND, QUILT, GATHER, AND SEW ON A BAND AT THE SAME TIME.

THEY MAKE FOUR DIFFERENT STITCHES, and have many advantages possessed by no other Machines, including the REVERSIBLE FEED, for fastening off the ends of seams without removing the work from the Machine.

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ON THE RIALTO.

CHEAP CALICO.

IN matters of commerce, as in ailments of the human body, the first step towards improvement is that the sufferer should clearly apprehend the nature and gravity of the disorder, and also its cause. The cause of the pressure which has weighed upon the cotton spinners and manufacturers for so long a period, and which now threatens to submerge in hopeless ruin a majority of the trade, is simply over-production. This over-production is not of a transitory nature, consequent on the temporary closing of some of the usual outlets for their commodities; it has endured for several years, and it will last as long as anything like the present quantity of cotton is worked up at anything like the present rates. The crisis now lying like a foul nightmare upon our district cannot be removed by a fugitive and local application. It can only be conquered by the united action of the entire trade in very rigorous Short Time, and by dogged and persistent perseverance in it over a lengthened period; or in a "fortuitous concourse" of individual action leading to the same result. Hitherto the action of the trade has been spasmodic. As a rule it has frankly acknowledged that there is no chance of cheap cotton except by the means of using less. It has also, though less thoroughly, admitted the small hope there was of other than a losing business with cotton at recent values. But its only attempt to bring about what it recognises as its cure has been to stop for an extra day or two at wakes or holiday time; to let a few looms stand, or to close a mill entirely when the loss grew so frightful as to presage immediate collapse. But as soon as ever the loss became less the factory has started again, only in a few weeks to find things as bad as ever. Until every spinner and manufacturer has it literally burnt into his mind that, so long as he is producing on a basis of eleven pence a pound for cotton, he has no chance of making money; that, so long as he touches the raw material at that price he is playing with fire that will absolutely consume him in the end—there is no hope for Lancashire.

Talk about education for the operatives—the great desideratum of the day is a system of elementary education of the Masters in the history of their own trade. Demosthenes, asked to name the three requisites for an orator, said, "Action; action; action." Danton, summing up the three necessities of his era, defined them as "*de l'audace—encore de l'audace—toujours de l'audace!*" and the three bases of the very life of the Cotton Trade are "Cheapness; cheapness; cheapness." Cheapness created the trade: cheapness has been and ever must be the breath of its nostrils; and whenever cotton productions are dear, the prosecution of the trade is ruinous to somebody. The Spinner may make money, and the Manufacturer lose it; or their relative positions may be reversed; or it may happen that both are prosperous, and then the loss falls on the Merchant who is rash enough to meddle with dear productions. This is the fact, as proved by the past experience of the trade; but it is also a theorem which a philosopher might have laid down *à priori* in his study from a careful survey of its history. James V. of Scotland exclaimed, when he found that he was the father of the hapless Mary, alluding to his crown: "It cam' by a lass and it will gang by a lass;" and a monarch among cotton spinners might say of the mighty industry that has enriched him and his country, "It came by cheapness—it will go by dearness."

Speaking broadly (we are laying down broad principles, and have no occasion to be to a nicety as to dates or other details), the cotton industry of this county is a matter of just one century. England was great and prosperous without it; she was powerful abroad, and her people were clothed at home; there were no quarterly and annual tables of exports for the *Times* to grow jubilant over; and the entire world got on well enough without us. What little cotton was used up entailed on the finished article such a high price, owing to the clumsy machinery in vogue, that cotton fabrics were almost luxuries; the trade was extremely limited; Lancashire was one of the least important of English counties; the British public was clothed in woollen and linen, and made a supply last a lifetime; and the vast millions of semi-savages we have since clad sunned themselves, contented, in the garments they brought with them into this perplexed existence. Suddenly a series of inventions flashed, like so many forks of lightning, from the vivid brains of a knot of independent geniuses, and all seemed to seek cotton as their point of attraction. Watt's steam-engine was followed by Arkwright's inventions, by Crompton's mule, by the power-loom, and, as a powerful adjunct, by the canal system of the Duke of Bridgewater. Cotton goods speedily became *cheap*—the very cheapest article of clothing that could be put upon the back of the human animal. Then commenced a species of commercial propagandism, comparable to the rise and spread of Mahommedanism over the East. From damp and dusky South-Lancashire the infant industry set out over the British Islands, over our colonies, over the whole globe, conquering and to conquer; until other discoveries, such as railways, steam navigation, and more enlightened fiscal principles coming to its aid, it grew to be the mighty thing it was, and is, and may be. But its one sole secret of success was cheapness. By sheer cheapness it gradually displaced linen and woollen among the civilised; and, by its slight cost, it induced the semi-barbarian to do homage to, at any rate, a moderate sense of decency. This, however, was not accomplished without a struggle. There is no man of middle-age who does not recollect when it was considered one of the tests of almost decent respectability to wear a linen shirt; no one who does not recollect how his mother or grandmother would have looked upon cotton sheets as an absolute disgrace. Common sense and cheapness, however, carried the day. Cotton sheets are as universal as taxes; and a person with a linen shirt is as great a rarity as a Jew with a *nez retroussé*. But that the industry can be destroyed by reversing the engine, so to speak, the history of the past few years has proved abundantly. Could we call up the bankrupts of the past six years, would they not tell one sad tale of ruin consequent on calculations that people *must* have cotton goods irrespective of price. The British matron arose in her might and absolutely refused to touch them. The latent power of saving in cotton articles of personal and household use she developed was prodigious; sheets, apparently done, were made to last for years by turning and patching; an embargo was laid upon new shirts. She declined to line her dresses, first of all, and extinguished one department of our home trade altogether; then she abolished the use of prints and muslins, and took to linseys, and mixtures of various kinds; while her lord and obedient servant, if he rebelled against jagged edges and frayed fronts, turned aside into flannel shirts and silks, and struck at once a double blow at cotton and the washerwoman. New industries were created; the channel of the course of home trade was turned aside; cotton has to reconquer a lost territory, and it can only

regain it, as it originally won it, by cheapness. There is no doubt that, were calico to grow as dear as cloth of gold, some people would still use it; nay, so absurd is fashion, that were calico excessively dear, it might obtain increased demand as an article of luxury, as there are people who prefer a half-guinea melon to a penny orange. But one such mill as Wood's, of Glossop, would amply supply any demand of that nature. The cotton trade cannot be maintained by our own home demand, even were that at full stretch and scope. Any one large-producing town could supply that. We can have no prosperity unless China and India will use our products freely, lavishly, carelessly, as things so cheap as not to be debated about and thought over ere they are bought and worn. In this all-important branch of our commerce the cardinal difficulty arises, that the articles we have to offer are only, to a limited extent, matters of absolute necessity. The etiquette of the East as regards the decencies of life, or its religious exactments, in the article of clothing, are not rigid. If calico is cheap, not only will our Eastern customer have a covering for his head, as well as his loins, but he will renew them when worn, without the expense and labour of washing. But, if calico be dear, he will dispense with other adornment than his little ephod, and will grind it into whiteness, with stones in the brook, so long as a trace of reed or pick remains. If it grow very dear, he will dispense with it altogether. Again, the greater proportion of our oriental customers have a fixed and very limited income; and we all know that when a tug comes between Belly and Back, that it is the latter which suffers. The old English song says :—

Back and side go bare, go bare!
Hand and foot go cold!
But Belly, God send thee store enough
Of jolly good Ale and old.

But in the east, when back and side go bare they don't go cold, and therefore the stomach gets its full supply of rice and the back has so much less Calico. A dear newspaper were not a greater absurdity now-a-days than dear Calico. You can have a dear newspaper or two appealing to the wealthy classes which may thrive; but the Press, as a rule, must maintain the magic penny as its maximum, and appeal to tens of thousands. In like manner the Cotton Trade is condemned to adapt itself to these adamantine conditions—high prices and a small trade: cheap Calico and a roaring business. It cannot evade it. The primal law of its existence prevents it; and it can no more send out the quantity of Calicoes woven on a basis of eleven pence per pound that would be natural at seven pence, without overwhelming loss, than the Mayor of Snigbruck could speak English, the Exchange Committee deal liberally with the public, or the fag-end of the League be conciliatory to Moderate Liberals.

This being the case; there being no chance of other than a losing trade unless Cotton be materially lower, and there being no chance of lessening the cost of Cotton except by Short Time, why is not half-time universal over the Cotton using districts? The *Sphinx* will endeavour to give an answer in a subsequent number.

GOSSIP FROM THE RESTAURANTS.

MISFORTUNES seldom come single. Our old friend Dan, who a short time since narrowly escaped what the penny-a-liners call a watery grave, has since nearly fallen a victim to the devouring element, his establishment being partly burnt down. We are glad to learn, however, that Dan was fully insured, and that no greater harm was done than a little inconvenience, and the over-cooking of sundry chops and steaks, after the manner of Charles Lamb's roast pig. Dan, as usual, supplies lunch, which has received the name of "a hoff," in commemoration of a late excursion. The custom of the purveyors of chops and steaks calling their eating houses by an abbreviation of their Christian names seems to be still on the increase. Sam has turned up in Cockpit Hill and Ned in Deansgate. Thomas who *stood* so long with Mr. Brown, is still standing. Another owner of a similar establishment, styles himself No. 2, and still another No. 6. Perhaps we shall be having the proprietresses following suit, and instead of Mesdames Stewart, Nicholson and Charlesworth, have the diminutives of Jane, Emmy, and Molly.

THE TONIC-SOL-FA-ISTS.

THE attraction offered to those who have difficulty in passing their holiday hours, was last Saturday night of a somewhat novel character, viz.: a concert "by a choir of five hundred certificated singers," trained on the Tonic-Sol-Fa system of notation. Whatever may be said of the entertainment absolutely, there can be no doubt that it was a great improvement on some that are offered. Compared with that dreariest of all possible amusements the comic concert, which recurs so interminably, the Tonic-Sol-Fa concert was not only exciting and pleasant, but excessively amusing and funny.

It is not our intention to enter into a discussion as to the relative claims of the new and old systems. Believers in the old method profess to regard the new one with contempt and scorn, as something rather childish; whilst the disciples of the Tonic-Sol-Fa system are prepared to be enthusiastic, as those should be who believe in something which excites hostility. The supporters of the old notation, who are, of course, those who have been trained in that system, whilst they admit that the Tonic-Sol-Fa method may be useful as a means for popularising the study of elementary vocal music, declare that the teaching is, to a certain extent, necessarily elementary, superficial, and wanting in thoroughness; and ask what great vocalist can be quoted to illustrate the great things which such training can do. On the other side, it is stated that the new method simplifies the matter, and thereby very greatly diminishes the students' difficulties, and, at the same time, allows for the attainment of any degree of profundity of knowledge.

The first glance at the "five hundred" gave one an impression of incongruity and want of harmony in the separate component units. The attire of the ladies was wonderful, and would have astonished those young ladies who occasionally honour the gymnasium of the Athenæum with their presence and vocal performances, many of whom may be regarded as the perfection of dressers and amateur vocalists. The prevailing colour of the ladies' dresses was white—a disheartening and limp whiteness, palpably due to the purifying influence of soap; and the prevailing style of hair arrangement, ringlets, of the gushing order. Mingled with the white were little striking dabs of black, purple, and scarlet. Every lady had evidently thought of appearing in full evening dress; but fundamental differences of opinion as to the exact attire which might be considered to constitute evening dress appeared to have prevailed, and a curious medley was the result. The gentlemen, too, regarded their appearance with some satisfaction. Black, of the most unmitigated church-going type, reigned supreme. An occasional white waistcoat only served, by contrast, to make the black clothes look darker. There was also on the platform at least one pair of white gloves; they were worn by one of the two highly-excited gentlemen who, in turns, wielded the baton. Early in the evening they occupied a very prominent place before the eyes of the audience; but gradually excitement and labour began to tell, and they were, by degrees, discarded, for the more convenient wiping of their owner's streaming forehead.

The audience was certainly not less miscellaneous and curious than the performers. Each separate choir appeared to have attracted a select and well-defined band of supporters and admirers. Most of the body of the hall was taken up by reserved seats. A subscriber to Hallé's would have been surprised, if not delighted, at the appearance they presented. Perhaps everything done there might not have been approved by those having regard to strict etiquette. Still natural politeness is not, we think, diminishing, if it is safe to judge from the indisputable fact that considerably fewer hats were worn during the whole performance than on a similar occasion last year. There was a conspicuous absence from the area of all the regular frequenters of the juvenile swell order, who enjoy, more than any other earthly pleasure, listening to the glorious

comicalities of the Great Vance, the original Champagne Charlie, or some such worthy. Everybody in the area was remarkably good-humoured. Even in the reserved seats oranges were very much in vogue; they were still more popular in the area. The whole atmosphere seemed redolent with orange-peel; and we were much mistaken if we did not also perceive the perfume of tobacco. The audience was good-temperedly vigorous in its disposition to hear everybody sing everything over again (such polite disposition displays itself with more aristocratic audiences). This was carried far enough to provoke one of the frantic gentlemen into the violent display of a huge silver watch. Another noticeable feature was the prevalence of the idea that it was quite proper to beat time with the feet, in a sort of chorus, when any air took the popular taste. This peculiarity, and the oranges and tobacco together, somehow dimly suggested either a Knot Mill Fair circus or a music-hall. There was little in the musical part of the affair which needs lengthened criticism. The earlier part of the programme consisted exclusively of sacred music. Part second included glees, choruses, and part-songs. The unsteadiness and roughness which were to be expected, under the circumstances, in the united effects, were obvious enough; whilst in the part-songs the voices seldom balanced each other. Notwithstanding these drawbacks, it is impossible to doubt the success of the concert as a whole. And whatever might be the opinion of critical hearers as to their efforts, there can be but one opinion as to what the vocalists themselves thought of them. They were so perfectly pleased with themselves that it became morally impossible to doubt that each piece was perfectly rendered.

THE ERA.

PRETTY nearly every trade, occupation, profession, and pursuit has its organ—generally unknown to the outside public—which chronicles its doings, and ventilates its grievances. The *Era* is the organ of the theatrical profession. A considerable portion of its columns is devoted to sporting matters, but they are made subordinate to its dramatic department, and we shall not further allude to them. The *Era*, then, is the organ of the theatrical profession. Horrible as the idea of the existence of such a machinery of abomination may be to the pious ladies who bring the circulation of *Good Words*, the *Leisure Hour*, and kindred dulness up to such high figures—it exists. Possibly they may ere this have been aware of the existence of such things as theatres and actors, but we question whether the dreadful thought ever entered their immaculate minds that these abominable institutions had attained to such an organisation of iniquity as to have a society and a newspaper of their own. But they have. The theatrical profession exists—and long may it, and long it will—to an extent, and with a vitality, of which they have not the faintest idea. It has attained to the dimensions of a world. Cut off from the rest of humanity by its own degradation and the prejudice of mankind, it lives an astonishing amount of life, virtuous and vicious, *in* but not *of* society. With many good qualities, and with many bad ones, peculiarly its own, it thrives. To anyone taking up the *Era* for the first time, its contents are a new revelation of life; they are a glimpse into a busy, teeming existence which is, and has been, going on close by his side, unnoticed and unknown. He finds that the little local theatre into which he turns sometimes when he has nothing better to do, and which appeared to pine in solitary desolation—is a little part of a great system, has a place and an importance in the sphere which it belongs to, and has its insignificant performances recorded in a chronicle—as sedulously kept as the history of kings—of all that is going on at theatres throughout the English world. A bond of brotherhood unites them. The "immense successes" we see here at home travel round the globe.

In the *Era* may be found a record, and a gentle—very gentle—criticism of the plays in course of action at every theatre in England, and at the principal theatres of the United States and Australia, including even such unearthly parts as California and New Zealand. Of course, the paper has not got artistic critics at each city in the world; and if you expect to find in it a trenchant notice of the last new play upon some undiscovered island in the Arctic Ocean, you will be disappointed; but that a paltry amateur performance in the gold-diggings should simply be recorded, is at first astonishing, and opens wide the eyes that have been blinking over *Goody Words*. How queerly, in connection with the strange, outlandish names of camps and stations in Australian wilds, sound the familiar titles of the farces acted nightly on the London boards! How preposterous it seems that such rubbish should travel such a distance! It is nearly enough to make one feel a little emotion almost like respect even for a farce. One cannot help deferring just a little bit to anything that has been twenty thousand miles off. However, farces not only travel, but have their travels duly chronicled in Brydges-street, Strand. We may read, every week, that down by Shootemalivo River, Miss Madge Montague perfectly entranced the house by her charming embodiment of Angelina Spriggins, and that Mr. Henry Montmorency was repeatedly summoned before the curtain to bow his acknowledgments of the keen appreciation which had greeted his admirable rendering of the eccentric Snuffins. Nor, while recording the doings on the other side of the theatrical world, does the *Era* neglect this. Every new play is noticed at great length in its pages; all the latest items of theatrical intelligence will be found in the same comprehensive repertory; and in its correspondence column the grievances of which every Englishman, even though an actor, is supposed to keep a stock on hand, lift up their voices and proclaim themselves. In odd corners you will meet with bits of gossip about actors and actresses. You will be pleased to hear that Miss Amy Sedgwick is at length recovering from her late severe indisposition; you will not be surprised to perceive that H. R. H. the Prince of Wales took the first opportunity of going to see Schneider in Paris; you will be delighted to be informed that there is no truth in the report that Mr. Benjamin Webster is about to marry Miss Furtado; and you will be sorry to learn that Miss Louisa Moore, the popular and accomplished actress, accompanied by her mother, has sailed for America. When the popular and accomplished actress, or the talented and favourite *danseuse*, or the whatever-it-may-be, accompanied by her mother, sister, brother, or whoever-it-may-be, has reached America, you are regaled with the raptures of the American press over her arrival, in a string of extracts from a brace of papers you have heard of and a score of which you do not know the names. Whether these excerpts are advertisements—that is, are paid for as such—we do not know; but they certainly read remarkably like it. No praise is too unintelligent, or fulsome, for the *Era* to insert: in a choice selection of American ecstacies over Miss Thompson, as Ixion, we are treated to some rabid Yankee ravings over "Lydia's gleaming arms."

This is the *Era's* great fault. In its original remarks, and in its extracts, it is much too eulogistic. As a record, it is excellent; as a critic, it is worthless. According to it, every man is able and popular; every woman is charming, and a favourite; everything is clever, and a great hit. No doubt this is natural. The unfortunate theatrical profession gets so abused by the world that it can hardly be expected to attack itself. But it is injudicious to beslaver everything about it with praise. This indiscriminating, and for the most part unwarrantable and unappreciative eulogy only palls upon the palate; it leaves no favourable impression on the mind. The *Era* makes a great mistake. It should not accept everything that praises up everything theatrical; it should not resent everything that blames anything theatrical. It ought not to let professional partisanship blind it to the truth. Every manager is not spirited and enterprising; every author is not a genius; every play

is not spotless; every actor is not a gentleman; every actress is not a vestal virgin. Then, the *Era* should not pretend that they are. Not only does it romance itself, but it will not tolerate anybody who refuses to do the same. It abuses them right and left—north, south, east, and west. If such a thing as an honest, truthful article could be found amongst all the rancid butter of contemporary dramatic criticism, we dare say the *Era's* indignation at it would be only one step from the sublime. If that hypothetical article stuck a knife into the cancer that eats up three quarters of the drama's better life, we have no doubt that the *Era* would say, "to take any notice of *the thing*—so vile and false—would be giving a gratis advertisement." We do not wonder at the *Era's* indignation. We can almost sympathise with it. The poor theatre gets so abominably libelled by ignorant piety that it is with a heavy heart one digs one's pen into it. But truth is truth, and must prevail. Nothing in this world was ever ultimately benefitted by being bolstered up with falsehoods. However, some falsehood is unintentional; much indignation at what is not only right but praiseworthy springs from kindliness. Perhaps the *Era's* does. And we are not malicious. Though it will not give us the gratis advertisement of a line—in return for its hard and unjust words, we give it the gratis advertisement of an article.

But it must not be supposed that the *Era* is incapable of censuring. The manner in which it cuts into the unfortunate amateur performers who bring themselves under its notice, is quite sufficient to redeem its capacity in this respect. We should not be doing it justice, either, if we did not admit that now and then it lashes out at some real evil practice and abuse. It does occasionally array itself upon the side of truth and stricture even against its own profession. It must have the credit of energetically wielding pen, paste, and scissors, for some time back, against that tinpot tomfoolery which, under the name of a Dramatic Fête and Fancy Fair, affords an annual rendezvous for three-fourths of the disreputable male and female characters in London, and holds up the theatrical profession to derision and scorn. In denouncing this ignominy, the *Era* is upon the side of virtue, sense, and policy. We only wish that the same good taste and intelligence which make it reprehend this degrading exhibition, would induce it to extend its strictures to a hundred other stage abuses just as flagrant. It would, by so doing, benefit its calling fifty times as much as it does by its uniform reservation of censure and its perpetual prodigality of praise. The whole theatrical system wants revolutionising. It is corrupt and bad. There is scarcely a dramatist that can dramatise, there is scarcely an actor that can act, and there is scarcely a manager that can manage. One cannot see a piece without having one's taste offended over and over again. From the general spirit of the drama to the most trivial points of business-detail and arrangement, the theatre wants thoroughly reforming. There is nothing right about it. The stage is, as it exists, utterly, radically, and essentially low and vulgar. It is in the hands of uneducated men, who have no sense of honour and no taste. The present race of critics should be swept at once away: the drama wants no mealy-mouthed nonentities to drone false platitudes about it, but a band of sturdy censors who will stick their pens deep in its every part, nor leave an inch unscathed. The *Era* ought to lead the van, and prick the whole profession with its stings.

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A CHIGNON, with a Short Account of the Lives of its Inhabitants. By the author of the *Heir of Radcliffe.*

STRIKING A BALANCE. By the author of *He Knew he was Right.*

THE TRIBULATION OF JONAH. By the authoress of *A Month in the Midlands.*

GROSS PROFITS.—The persevering pork butcher's just reward.

THE ART UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN.

THE Art Union of Great Britain, according to its prospectus, is not a private speculation, but has been established solely for the purpose of creating and encouraging a taste for the Fine Arts. Moreover it is Under the Sanction of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council, and, as committee of management, has twelve gentlemen, unknown to us, but who, we presume, are sufficiently known, if not to all Great Britain, at least to Manchester, where their head-quarters are, as being thoroughly acquainted with all matters pertaining to Art, and a guarantee, therefore, that the subscriptions they invite will be properly applied. The intention is praiseworthy; let us see how it is being carried out, and how it compares with other Art Unions, that of London for instance, which was established for identical objects. The Art Union of London has one advantage over this of Great Britain in having the prizes drawn in money, and allowing the lucky oues to select their own prizes from the annual collections exhibited at the Royal Academy, or the principal Water Colour Societies. The prizeholder, therefore, if he chooses a bad or dear picture, has only himself to blame, whereas in the Art Union of Great Britain, the pictures themselves are drawn as prizes. If therefore the lucky man doesn't like his prize he must lump it: he has no choice. Then, again, in the London Art Union, even the unlucky ones are not wholly unlucky, since every subscriber is entitled to an engraving, often in the very best line manner, and, generally speaking, of nearly the value of his subscription, and sometimes of greater value; whereas in the Art Union of Great Britain the unlucky ones get nothing. It is true the subscription is only a shilling, and for that sum you could give nothing worth having, unless it might be a superior woodcut, designed by a Master, and printed on paper that will last for centuries, but every subscriber for twenty shares, which, at a shilling a piece, is twenty shillings, is entitled to what? The prospectus doesn't tell us, but from a paragraph in the *Scotsman* newspaper, we learn that he is entitled to a photograph, taken from the picture which ranks as the first prize. For twenty shillings subscribed you get for certain a trumpery photograph from a commonplace picture. So far the Art Union of Great Britain does not compare well with the London Art Union. But a more important matter for subscribers to consider is how their money is laid out. After a survey of the pictures to be awarded as prizes, our impression is that it could scarcely have been laid out worse; and not only do we think that the gentlemen composing the committee of management have no knowledge of Art, but we doubt whether they have any notion of economy. The prices they have paid for these pictures are outrageous. At a rough guess we should say they have given three times as much money for them as they are worth.

So far we have written in the interest of the subscribers to the Art Union of Great Britain. We have now a word to say in the interest of the Fine Arts. The object of this society is professedly to create a taste for Art in the community. Now we have to tell the gentlemen forming the committee of management that they have missed their vocation entirely; that these things they have gathered together are not, properly speaking, works of Art at all, but simply manufactured goods, and if the gentlemen think that the encouragement of the production of such things as these tends in any way to create a taste for Art, or furthers the interest of Art in any way, they are very much mistaken. If the gentlemen wish to encourage Mediocrity, and fill the world with lumber, let them go on as they are doing; but call things by their right names if you please, and do not try to persuade yourselves or others that any encouragement of such things as these is a step in the right direction,—is in any way a stepping stone to higher things. For it is not so. Better, much better, no art at all than bad art. Weak, bungling,

or childish art one can sympathise with, or at lowest get a laugh out of, but art which in the name of the highest aims at nothing beyond handicraft is painful. You are oppressed as by an incubus at the sight of it. It is a mere dead weight, an eyesore and a nuisance that ought to be abated.

We had intended writing critical notes on the pictures to be distributed as prizes, but on entering the room where they are exhibited our heart failed us, our critical faculty was paralysed for the time, for such a collection of common-place pictures it never was our lot to see. They are not rubbish exactly, but glaring or meretricious things, admirably adapted to fascinate the ignorant and cause them to exclaim—how fine! Ignorance has a wide realm. It is no wonder, therefore, that this Art Union has been successful. It has, since it was started, received in shillings £78,694, a goodly sum, which, so far as the interest of Art is concerned, might just as well have been thrown into the sea, and has given encouragement to what? We should very much like to know what.

The statement that it is Under the Sanction of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council sounds well, and gives an air of Royal Authority to the undertaking, but probably it is nothing more than mere sound, signifying nothing. Soon after the Art Union of London was launched, it began to be doubtful whether art lotteries, as they were called, were legal. The subject was discussed to all lengths, but the decision of the question hung in the wind for a long time. Finally Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council decided that they were not illegal. Hence, we suppose, the heading to Art Union advertisements since. There are many things both great and small under the august sanction. Even ticket-of-leave men, we suppose, go about the streets Under the Sanction of Her Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council.

THE NEW (THEATRE ROYAL) MINISTRY.

The T. R. Parliament will open for the season to-night. The following list comprises the cabinet :—

First Lord of the Treasury	Mr. JOHN KNOWLES.
Chancellor of the Exchequer	Mr. CHAMBERS.
Lord High Chancellor	The SPHINX.
Universal Affairs	Mr. F. EVERILL.
First Lord of Admirals	Mr. CLIFFORD COOPER.
Foreign or Out-door Affairs	Mr. WILLIAM STICKER.
Home Department	Mr. C. H. E. K. TAKER.
Refreshments	RT. HON. JAMES LEE.
Heavy Affairs	Mr. GEORGE RIGNOLD.
Irish Secretary	Sir F. BARSBY.
Colonies	"The TICKET OF LEAVE MAN."
Clowns of the Treasury	Mr. E. RIGHTON and Mr. W. GOMERSALL.
Biggest Stick in Waiting	Mr. T. MORTON.
Mistress of the Robes	Mrs. BICKERSTAFF.

NEW YEAR'S DAY AND THE POSTMAN.

IT would be a popular act on the part of Lord Hartington if he would inaugurate his management of the Post Office, by issuing an order prohibiting letter carriers from asking for New Year's gifts. We don't see why letter carriers are entitled to levy black mail upon heavily taxed citizens any more than tide waiters, income-tax collectors, or other government officials. If their wages are not high enough, let them be raised. The Post-office has a large revenue, and can afford it. To be asked for New Year's gifts as a right, and insulted if refused, is an abominable nuisance. It is also a frequent custom to give letter carriers drink on the morning of the new year, and these officials ought to be forbidden to take it. Last year we knew of more than one instance where the letter carrier arrived two hours past his time, and in such a state of intoxication that he could not even read the addresses of his letters.

A SIGN OF IMPROVEMENT.—The Rising Son.

MR. HALLE'S CONCERTS.

THE ANCIENT MARINER : MENDELSSOHN'S WALPURGIS NIGHT : MOZART'S SERENADE : BEETHOVEN : CHERUBINI.

THE seventh concert introduced Mr. Barnett's cantata, *The Ancient Mariner*, to a Manchester audience. In greeting the first work of young talent, we consciously assume the attitude of the mere listener, with his encouraging smile, rather than that of the scowling critic. *The Ancient Mariner* is a poem so powerful in itself that it is doubtful if any music could increase its dramatic force. As we slowly follow the words, however pictorial the music may be in itself, it is apt at times to sound inadequate. At the same time, we cannot help feeling that it is a work of real musical inspiration, and not merely a work of musical ambition. There are men who are filled with the strong need of having something to say; there are other men who are only filled with the strong need of saying something. We are greatly struck by the art with which Mr. Barnett has interwoven the voices and the instruments in such a manner as to scatter a tint of ballad over the cantata, an effect which we have hitherto only associated with solo songs. Indeed, the work is steeped in poetical feeling, if not in poetical thought; and it is to the young priests of music, of literature, and of art that we look, in this age of materialism, to keep our hearts young and hopeful, and to nourish our faith in the Unseen. It is well that we have such men as Scheffer and Gibson, as Browning and Schubert, to allure us, now and then, into a moral existence, above the petty needs and hypocrisies of practical life. It is as impossible to predict the career of a young man as it is to predict the course which a kite will take when you give it string. Sometimes it rises straightly and rapidly, sometimes it rises waveringly, yet, surely, sometimes it flounders a little above ground, and then pitches headwards down again; sometimes it lodges betwixt heaven and earth, entangled on a chimney-pot. This is the most mischievous kind of kite. There is nothing so difficult as dislodging mediocrity from the house-top, which common people mistake for a pedestal. For instance, you can no more convince a British school-girl that Mr. Tupper is only a kite clinging fast to his bit of chimney-pot, and not a poet reposing in the skies, than you can convince her that every respectably-dressed young man in the streets is not an Heir of Redcliffe. The performance of the cantata was throughout almost excellent. The solos were undertaken by the sisters Doria, whoever they may be, Mr. Vernon Rigby, and Mr. Foley. We understand that Mr. Foley is an American, and we cannot understand why he has Italianized his name into Signor Foli. If he were a very miserable singer, there would be a certain patriotism in concealing his nationality. But, seeing that he is a gifted artist, we do not think that he needs an Italian passport to enter the cosmopolitan kingdom of music.

The second part of the concert consisted of Mendelssohn's *Walpurgis Night*. We cannot insist too strongly upon the grave mistake of giving two long vocal pieces in one evening. The orchestra showed signs of fatigue, and the overture, which at any time is full of difficulties, was full of impediments to tired musicians. One oratorio, in itself longer than two smaller works, would not be so exhausting, because the same interest extends over the whole performance—just as in Switzerland it is easier to ascend the Matterhorn in one day than to do two minor mountains which, added together, may not equal its height. As the performance advanced, we were sadly convinced that only a reading rehearsal, and no analytical one, had taken place. We felt a want of sympathy for the glorious work; we strained our ears for more clearness; we saw the constant moving up and down of hands, but our ears were denied any corresponding effect. In particular, the end was spoilt, where the rays of

coming light dissolve the gloom and the storm into trembling and fierce tenderness. The *Walpurgis Night* was played last season in the same unsatisfactory style. If last year it made Mendelssohn turn in his grave, this year it will have turned him back again into his original position. Many of his admirers rank this work as his greatest; and, indeed, if we imagine his genius to be a winged phœnix, ranging from boundary to boundary of its domain, the *Walpurgis Night* must be considered one of his extremest flights. In it we find a remarkable manifestation of his genius—he could make the terrible beautiful. But at this performance of it, by some slight mistake, the beautiful was made terrible.

The eighth concert commenced with Weber's *Euryanthe* overture. It is a favourite one with all orchestras, and it is the rule, rather than the exception, to hear it brilliantly performed, as it was on this evening.

We could write a great deal about Beethoven's Grand Symphony in F, but we can say nothing which the Symphony does not say better itself. We cannot too frequently insist that whatever interpretation we may put upon the works of Beethoven, it is not done in any pedantic spirit, but, confessedly, in a groping, inarticulate spirit, to which we are keenly alive. It requires a kind of cynicism to clench the turbulent feelings of two hours ago into neat little sentences. It is like illustrating Mr. Swinburne's poetry with diagrams. The rich playfulness which characterises this symphony was, no doubt, inspired by Haydn's compositions. Haydn was Beethoven's teacher at the time. And yet it is not Haydn's child-like playfulness, but rather the intellectual playfulness of manhood, the recognition of humour, the joyousness of the man with steady purpose, which finds expression. The first two movements are so original, so fresh, so ready-made from heaven, that it is impossible to spin them, like a spider, through a miserable steel pen. In the minuetto there are passages which are likely to puzzle the listener, and to make the best-schooled musician doubt. It is full of caprices, of oddities, of jests. Even Beethoven's own pupil, Ries, had his ears boxed for pointing out an error in this movement. He forgot that the splendid errors of great men are preferable to the fatal prudences of little men. In the last movement the inexhaustible humour reaches both its height and its justification. The air, which was filled almost to obscurity with the gay, fanciful ephemera, becomes clearer, and the undeviating purpose, like grand Corinthian pillars, is seen behind.

Mozart's Serenade was a luxury of a peculiar kind. Perhaps Mozart is the only composer who could command the attention of an audience with a combination of wind instruments alone, after they have been listening to the splendours of a full orchestra. We do not recommend any other composer to try the experiment. He might blow the audience away. The performance of the Serenade exceeded our expectations. It is a comical piece of music, and not free from a certain very charming monotony. This monotony might be counteracted by varying the expression more. We suggest that the Andante con Variazioni should be played piano throughout.

Cherubini's overture to *Anacreon* taxes an orchestra in no small measure, and this evening's performance of it compares favourably with others we have heard. Cherubini's genius is of a peculiarly aristocratic character. He never condescends to the ear-flattering effects of the materialistic school. The consequence is that his works demand a corresponding refinement in the rendering, and it is only just to say that at this performance we could comprehend Beethoven's deep reverence for Cherubini's purity of style. As an example we may quote the crescendo—a crescendo not like Rossini's—a musical figure repeated over and over again, and insisted upon by additional instruments and swelling sound, but a crescendo which commences with a little germ of thought, and gradually branches in and out until it expands the entire orchestra into one majestic form. Mr. Hallé played Mendelssohn's Rondo Brillante in B minor and Schumann's Arabeske in C. The Rondo is a masterpiece of symmetry. The ideas contrast and beautifully balance each other like the playing cards with which children build houses. You can't take one away without all the rest toppling over. And so we feel towards this composition, that the slightest alteration would shatter the work of art into poetical splinters. It is not too much to say that the tribute we have paid to Mozart of commanding his audience with small means, applies also to Mr. Charles Hallé's pianoforte playing, especially to his performance of Schumann's Arabeske towards the end of a concert already too long. Mdlle. Drasdil was the vocalist. Her voice is of the true alto character, and, no matter what she sings, she always pleases. We perceived slight symptoms of the tremolo fever, but we trust that she is not past recovery.

THIEVING AS A PROFESSION IN MANCHESTER.

A Volume of *Criminal and Miscellaneous Statistical Returns of the Manchester Police*, annually issued at the cost of the Corporation, is usually suggestive of very uncomfortable reflections. This year's document forms no exception to the rule. The first of the series of statistical tables of which the book consists informs us that during the year ending on the 29th September last, 9,365 robberies were reported to have been committed in the city. There were, besides, 482 "other offences dealt with as indictable," and ranging from wilful murder to a common assault. But it is with the robberies only that we have any present concern. Of them, 5,245, considerably more than one-half, were simple larcenies; 2,274 were larcenies from the person; and 1,074 were cases of burglary, and breaking into dwelling-houses, warehouses, shops, and all other premises. There were 202 cases of highway robbery, 47 of embezzlement, 19 of forgery, and 118 of obtaining goods and money by false pretences; 26 of horse, cattle, sheep, or dog stealing; and 360 of larceny by servants. The value of the property stolen or misappropriated is estimated at £31,814, of which £5,899 worth was recovered, leaving a balance of over £25,000 as the thieves' profits on the transactions of the year. There is, of course, a "per contra" account of conviction and punishment, but it does not constitute so heavy a set off as might be expected or desired. In only 2,021 of the 9,365—less than twenty-five per cent of the robberies—was any person apprehended. Of the 2,319 persons apprehended, 955 were discharged, 977 were summarily convicted—and of course sentenced to terms of imprisonment not exceeding six months—and 387 were committed for trial. Nineteen receivers of stolen goods also were committed. It is fair to assume that a majority of those sent for trial would be sentenced to some period of penal servitude; but some would doubtless be acquitted. Upon the whole it does not appear to us that the thieves have the worst of it. At all events it is tolerably certain that while the thieves of Manchester can net £25,000 a year, they will continue to brave the terrors of the law and dare the discipline of model prisons. For, after all, the risk they run is not very great. Assuming that in each of the 9,365 robberies, four persons were implicated, either as principals or accessories, we have a total of 37,460 persons with £25,000 to divide amongst themselves as the profits of the year; and of those 37,460, only 1,354 get committed—the majority for only very short terms of imprisonment. But in striking the balance of profit and loss it must be borne in mind that the same persons would no doubt commit many robberies. Their share of the proceeds would of course be proportionately great; and their chances of conviction relatively small. This will at once appear when the class of persons apprehended

is taken into consideration. Of 1,404 persons proceeded against on indictment, 128 only were known thieves, 208 were prostitutes, 281 suspicious characters, 52 habitual drunkards, 72 of previous good character, and the large proportion of 663 of unknown character. It is, therefore, obvious that of the really criminal class, by whom the bulk of the serious robberies are committed, very few are convicted. Especially will this appear when it is stated that there were at large within the Manchester police district in the month of September last 710 known thieves, 72 receivers of stolen goods, and 322 suspected persons, making, with prostitutes (809) and vagrants and tramps (261), a total of 2,174 persons, who, in one way or another, were living by plunder. Yet the number of known thieves proceeded against during the year was only 128. The Prince of Bohemia, who presides at the levées in Charter-street, must have some distinguished members of his court, and while the profession offers such prizes to the more eminent of its graduates, there is little chance of its seminaries wanting candidates for admission. There are within the city seventy houses of receivers of stolen goods, 325 brothels, and 214 tramps' lodging-houses. There are 77 public-houses, 138 beershops, 23 coffee shops, and 18 other suspected houses, which are the habitual resort of thieves and prostitutes. The fact that two hundred and fifty houses of entertainment are supported out of the profits of robbery and plunder is in itself evidence that those profits must be considerable; also that there still is something rotten somewhere—the "march of progress," the dissemination of Christianity, the diffusion of knowledge, the spread of education, household suffrage, and the Spanish revolution, notwithstanding. Perhaps the new ministry will see to it. We wonder whether the City Council or the Watch Committee could be induced to think the matter over.

MISS BRADDON,

AND HER LATEST NOVEL.

NOT many years ago, a very young man might have been seen walking up a famous London street, and looking about him in an inquiring manner. At last he disappeared. He entered a dark little room, at the further end of which was a counter. Behind that counter he dimly saw a man, and by it a lady, tall, plainly dressed, with her back turned towards the street. The new comer, standing unnoticed by the door, heard the clerk say "I congratulate you, madam, on your success." To which the lady, with quite as much awkwardness as is usually shown on like occasions, replied, "Thank you."

The very young man (who was about to be writer of this article) was perceived at this point, and having been sent up stairs, found his way into a room where sat the person he was seeking—a publisher. Nothing now remained for the very young man but to be got rid of with all decent celerity. This was done, but not before he was informed by the publisher that the lady he had seen in the shop was MISS BRADDON.

That numerous section of the public which, when anything is written or said, appraises it by the reputation of the person who wrote or said it, will readily perceive an extraordinary talent for authorship in the stammered "Thank you" of Miss Braddon. They will consider the present writer fortunate to have heard it. And, indeed, the encounter ought to be to him a source of pride and gratification. De Quincey undertook a long journey to get a sight of Wordsworth, and, if we remember rightly, did not on the first occasion get it. That well-known *literateur* of the last century, Percival Stockdale, made pilgrimages to the house where Thomson was born, to the Coffee-room where Dryden used to sit. Now, in the matter of readers, it will be admitted that where Dryden, Thomson, and Wordsworth together have slain their thousands, Miss Braddon has slain her ten thousands. Popularity being, of course, the test of merit, how readily De Quincey and Stockdale would admit that we were more than recompensed for the failure of our interview with the publisher!

That the nineteenth century is the century of centuries, is at least the opinion of us who live in it. Clearly, then, we ought to think very highly, indeed, of the most popular writer of the most advanced portion of this glorious era. What, to such a light as this, are the twinkles of, for instance, the Elizabethan period—a time but half-removed from the darkness of the feudal ages? What is Shakespere to Miss Braddon? It would be an insult to Miss Braddon to compare her to Shakespere; but, as the comparison is one which, on its own merits, clearly shows the superiority of the author of *Lady Audley's Secret* to the author of *Hamlet*, it may allowably be made. Compare, then, Shakespere's plots with Miss Braddon's. He stole his plots; Miss Braddon mostly makes her own. She utilizes her murders; he throws away these sublime effects. Does the reader suppose that, if Miss Braddon had given us a version of the story of *Hamlet*, she would have kept all the murders for that final scene, which makes the stage a slaughterhouse? No. She would either have sprinkled them judiciously, regarding them as the plums of her pudding, over the different parts of the piece; or, if writing in her latest manner, would have kept them all in their place at the end, and have added an equal number both at the beginning and in the middle. However interesting Ophelia may be, she would, in Miss Braddon's hands, have considerably added to her attractiveness by committing trigamy. Instead of boreing us with Hamlet's stupid soliloquies, Miss Braddon would have made the king more prominent. He would have kept his hand in at poisoning by operations, say, on Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. The Ghost, too, would not have been dropped as he is by Shakespere, but would, no doubt, have had his due prominence throughout, indulging in frequent appearances up to the fall of the curtain.

We have seen how far superior Miss Braddon is to Shakespere in his strongest point—tragic power. Let us now remark how in the knowledge, at least, of its use she excels Dickens in Dickens's *forte*—humour. Everybody has read *Pickwick*, and everybody, therefore, will agree that Sam Weller, and, indeed, most of the characters, are a great deal more humorous than is necessary. All authors of well-regulated mind must feel that it is the height of folly to waste one's originative strength. The fund of humour which Dickens lavishes on one character, Miss Braddon, with superior art, would have made suffice for a hundred three-volume novels. For instance, take Rosa, the market gardener's daughter, in that elegantly-entitled work *Only a Clod*. She does duty throughout, and gives all the humorous relief the book has. There is only one humorous point about her, her sensibility to the fascinations of public characters; but Miss Braddon's million readers are pleased, no doubt, to have the *maximum* of effect produced by the *minimum* of cause.

It will be plain that the remarks hitherto made have been dictated by a spirit of what Mrs. Slipslop calls ironing. In a like spirit, surely, Miss Braddon begins her preface to her latest work, *Run to Earth*, thus—"Colonel Mure, in his admirable work on Greek Literature—." If Miss Braddon calls Colonel Mure's work admirable, she has, of course, read it, and has thereby lost the excuse which a lady may urge for an ignorance of classic models. In defiance, then, not in ignorance of them, she has written *Run to Earth*. If asked to name a specimen of a book written in contravention of the principles of classic art, we should mention this last and worst work of Miss Braddon's. A few more remarks may be allowed on the contrast, for we may be enabled by its means to point out the real nature of sensational writing.

The main characteristic of Greek authors,—and the characteristic which has made them immortal,—is this, that their stage effects are used as the keys, merely, which unlock that wonderful storehouse of things good and bad, the human heart. Because a man's real character is, as

a great author, himself a Greek, says, displayed best in violent circumstances, therefore Greek poets use murder and adultery, and, to keep the parallel pointedly exact, bigamy. But because these effects are only a secondary purpose, and fulfil that purpose by being used very sparingly, therefore they are used as sparingly by Greek poets as they are profusely by Miss Braddon. Bearing this contrast in mind, we shall see through the sophistry of those who defend sensationalism on the ground that Shakespere and Sophocles are sensationalists. We shall see that the distinction between good and bad writers lies, not in the use of sensationalism, but in the abuse of it,—in an employment of it as a primary source of interest so excessive that, instead of giving life, it defeats its own purpose and gives death to literature. The skeleton supports the body, but by itself its function is more horrible than useful. To adopt an illustration which will be to the taste, perhaps, of Miss Braddon's admirers—prussic acid in small quantities is a constituent of food; in large it is a deadly poison. This last is a trite enough remark, but it is quite good enough for a public which already devours a third edition of the lately published *Run to Earth*.

Miss Braddon, we do not doubt, has a first-rate eye to business. She knows the value of contrast, and therefore introduces us to plenty of high, as well as low society, and even chequers the blackness of the villains with whom she crowds her stage by an admixture of good people. In *Only a Clod*, the least disagreeable of her books, there is a Mrs. Tredethlyn, who is really what would be called rather a nice woman, and makes one think that if Miss Braddon would make some practical use of her recent studies of Greek literature, especially noting its stage-direction that the horrible should be kept out of sight, she might give us pleasant and legitimately-interesting novels. But in her other books she seldom gives us this hope. As a rule, we find that Miss Braddon's idea of good people is easily summed up. She seems to think that they ought to be rather more ignorant of the world than a child of ten years old. As some compensation, she not unfrequently gifts them with that recurring source of pleasure, a large appetite. We have an instance in *The Doctor's Wife*. The hero of this moral and healthy novel is the most virtuous of surgeons. Miss Braddon seems to have a strange fancy that surgeons are either the worst of human beings, that is, addicted to slow poisoning, or the best, that is, fond of reading the police reports in the Sunday papers, and indulgent of an appetite for pork and onions. This is the character of the hero in *The Doctor's Wife*, and Miss Braddon makes a point by representing him, with much pathos, as losing the appetite aforesaid on discovering his wife's misbehaviour, which had hitherto escaped his notice, though about as obvious to a person of average intellect as the fact that two and two make four. But plots must be served, and in Miss Braddon's books the plot makes the people and not the people the plot. Her innocent idiots become clever and very suspicious indeed when the story demands it. The plot is a despot, and the characters are its slaves. If it were necessary for the development of a story of Miss Braddon's that Her Majesty's ministers should publicly play marbles in front of Buckingham Palace, she would gravely describe them as indulging in that pastime. We might reasonably expect something in return for this laxity. We might condone Miss Braddon's ignorance of the character of the virtuous if she were consistent in her representations of the vicious, whom she really understands. But she is abroad even when she is at home. Take for example the conduct she attributes to one of her favourites, Victor Carrington, *alias* the Viscomte Champfontaine, of Champfontaine. This gentleman, represented as a miracle of astuteness, desires to contrive the death of a hunting parson. As the Viscomte Champfontaine, of Champfontaine, has devoted himself, with a view to recover his family estates, to a successful study of the art of slow poisoning, he might be expected to utilise his accomplishment here. But hunting parsons being, of course, a remarkably acute and suspicious class of persons, it is plain that the means which are employed in other parts of the book to get rid of a baronet and a barrister, cannot now be used with safety. Instead, therefore, the Viscomte tries the following simple and safe method. By compromising himself with a groom of the lowest sort, he buys a savage horse, with a white spot. He gets the groom to paint the white spot brown, that the horse may be mistaken for another. He sends the horse down hundreds of miles into the west of England, where his victim hunts. Having got the horse into a suitable village, he rides it over, and, with very undeniable good luck, leaves it in the hunting parson's stable, and, without detection, rides back on the quiet horse he means it to represent. Singularly enough—though he relies on it to effect its purpose, on account of its savagery—it is while he rides it, and must be to carry on the plot, as quiet as a sheep. Miss Braddon alters, to suit her story, the character of horses, as well as those of men. Of course, in the novel, the device succeeds, and the hunting parson is thrown, and conveniently smashes his head against a tree. He is said to have been a good rider, and, of course, in actual life, the odds would have been hundreds to one against this complicated and stupid stratagem becoming fatal to anyone but the strategist. It ought to be painful to Miss Braddon to ascribe such imbecility to one of her pet slow poisoners.

It is painful to mark a writer's degeneracy—degeneracy, in this case, from bad to worse, and from worse to worst. Morbid as Miss Braddon's earlier novels were, they kept the reader's attention. But while *Aurora Floyd* was readable, one fails to understand how any reasonable being can keep open before him the sickening and superficial tale of villainy contained in the volumes of *Run to Earth*. Amongst many signs of her literary descent, it may be noted that Miss Braddon does not now take the trouble to prepare the scenic adjuncts she used to put on the stage. Her word-painting, which used to be passable, is now the barest and briefest possible; in fact, throughout *Run to Earth* the writing is on the confines of utter silliness; and, except in parts of the first and third volumes, even the plot is not interesting. The book stirs our curiosity, it is true; it excites in us a wish to see the three volumes which, of course, will follow it, and pass through many editions. For slow and sure degeneracy usually continues; and we are anxious to see by what management of her peculiar powers the writing of Miss Braddon can sink below what it has already reached—the lowest depth of literature.

LORD SALISBURY AND MR. GLADSTONE.

THE visit of Mr. Gladstone to the Marquis of Salisbury has given rise to a great deal of speculation, and is an event of some significance. Besides Mr. Gladstone, the party consisted of his colleagues, Mr. Lowe and Mr. Cardwell, Sir Roundell Palmer (the future Chancellor), the Bishop of Oxford (a disappointed ecclesiastic), and Mr. Butler Johnstone, M.P. (a Tory schismatic). What does it all mean? Hitherto Lord Salisbury has been a Tory among Tories; but, although his lordship's motives are beyond suspicion, conversion sometimes takes place very rapidly with unattached politicians; and since he seceded from the Derby Government, Lord Salisbury has remained aloof from the party. There was a strong rumour in the early part of the week that Lord Mayo was about to be recalled from India, and that the Marquis of Salisbury was to succeed him; but this is a step which we should think Mr. Gladstone would scarcely venture upon at present. It is much more likely that the meeting at Hatfield House was connected with the Irish Church question; and it would not surprise us to find Lord Salisbury executing a diversion in Mr. Gladstone's favour when the Disestablishment Bill comes before the House of Lords. Possibly, the Premier may have availed himself of the opportunity to disclose his intention regarding the disposal of the funds belonging to the Irish Church.

CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR'S DAY AT SEA.

THE following seasonable "extract from a log" was received by a Manchester gentleman from his son in Australia :—

24th Dec., 186 .—4° 50′ S. Lat., 27° 18′ W. Long. Miles run, 156. We had a mild squall this morning, with heavy rain, but it was all over by 9 a.m. Some of the passengers are talking about getting up a play for New Year's Eve, but I expect it will not come off. We passed a large shoal of small fish. They jumped out of the water by dozens, as though on purpose to feed a flock of birds that was hovering over them. Plenty of flying fish were knocking about as well.

25th.—7° 14′ S. Lat., 28° 17′ W. Long. Miles run, 148. I have read in Dickens's Christmas numbers, accounts of Christmas Day in all sorts of places, at sea amongst them, but I little thought then that it would ever be my lot to spend it on the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, almost on the Line. The cuddy was decorated with signal flags and placards of "Merry Christmas," &c., painted by the third and fourth officers, and it looked exceedingly pretty. Some of the ladies sent cards addressed from "Sea View," "Cuddy Park," &c. All the ladies were present at breakfast, which was a rare occurrence. At 10.30 a.m. we had prayers on the poop. The whole of the crew attended, as it was a holiday, and there were no squalls about ; but it was blowing so fresh that the service was scarcely audible. The hands had each a quart bottle of beer to dinner, in addition to their usual allowance of grog. In the afternoon they went in for gymnastics and games. I made an imitation bunch of mistletoe, which deceived many. The materials used in its composition were painted paper, green thread, white deal, and wire from champagne bottles. It hung over the captain's head at dinner, but though he was a handsome man and a bachelor, none of the ladies took advantage of it. It was afterwards placed in the stern cabin, the ladies' drawing-room. It was eventually divided to be kept as mementos. We had goose and plum pudding, amongst other viands, at dinner, and plenty of champagne. There was a splendid cake at dessert, with a miniature flagstaff upon it ; the "house flag" at the mast head, and the ship's number at the peak. We spent the evening as usual, and so concluded an agreeable day.

January 1st, 186 .—24° 19′ S. Lat., 28° 12′ W. Long. Miles run, 168. We had high fun last night, wishing good-bye to the old year and greeting the new one. We had plenty of toasts and singing. Our liquor was cold punch, sweet, strong, and plenty of it. It was brewed in a milk pail. One gentleman got preciously tight, and long after I had retired to my cabin I heard sundry crashes, caused by the falls of the unfortunate wight. He fell so heavily that I wonder he did not break his neck. The guardian spirit that looks after drunken men, &c., must have been sorely bothered to prevent such a catastrophe. The crew ushered in the new year with most discordant noises, ringing bells, beating tins, and rattling bones. There were not a few headaches this morning, and we rather chaffed the afflicted. Porpoises and flying fish came close to the ship to-day. Signalled the Rifleman, from Sydney to London, 50 days out. Promised to report us. We are now out of the tropics. I have enjoyed them much, and I wish we could sail the whole voyage within them. My face and hands are burnt a deep red brown.

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When bells and cap righte better hadde him suitedde,
Tryed hard to put man's sweetest solace doune—
Among some other notions wylde he mootedde,
As wycherafte deeminge ague and rheumatick,
And treatinge them untoe ye cure aquatick,
Which failynge—as yt sometymes didde somehowe—
He'd supplemente with faggotte, fire, and towe.
Weak gizzarddedde! 'tis easie toe construe
Why 'gainst my baccy thy aversionne growe;
Toe be in fashionne thou ysmokinge tryed,
Which ynside out yturneddde thy ynside.—
Oh! had'st thou knowne offe LAMB'S RENOWNED PYPES,
Thou had'st notte felt gymnasticks in thy trypes,
But puffedde in peace and growne a wiser Kynge,
To wytcherafte uppe and—everie other thynge.—
Syth, as it is, thye "Counter-blast" ing witte,
Ye moderne notions will in no wise fytte;
Soe fare ye weel, old regal cockolorum,
Jacobus Primus, Rex Brittaniorum!

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